

Dear Colleagues,

Please find below the mainstream news on Haiti for the period of September 1-6, 2006.

The results of a recent study published in the prestigious British medical journal, The Lancet, found that 8,000 people were killed and 35,000 women and girls sexually assaulted between February 2004 and December 2005. An estimated half of the killings are attributed to government forces and gangs opposed to President Aristide and the Lavalas political party. Almost all of the sexual assaults (90%) were actual rapes mostly committed by criminals, 14% perpetrated by Haitian policemen and 11% by anti-Lavalas groups. The study, conducted by two researchers from Wayne State University's School of Social Work, involved interviews with 5,720 people in 1,260 Haitian households in the areas in and around Port au Prince in December 2005. The Study's conclusions and the Lancet's editorial emphasize the need for the "UN and social service organizations to address the legal, medical, psychological and economic consequences of widespread human rights abuses and crime."

The study's coverage in the mainstream media is virtually non-existent in the U.S. (except one with interview the study's authors on the Democracy Now! Radio program, 9/1/06) while Andrew Buncombe of the UK-based Independent and award-winning journalist Jeff Heinrich of the Montreal Gazette are providing some excellent reporting of the ground-breaking study. An Edmonton Journal story emphasized the role of Canadian troops and police, under the auspices of the UN mission, "as among those UN personnel who threatened them [Haitian women] physically or sexually over the 22 months studied." The Canadian and American troops threatened Haitian women often when they were drunk and off-duty "but regarding Brazilian and Jordanian troops, a lot of the sexual threats were actually when they were on patrol." Canadian Foreign Affairs officials have yet to officially comment on the allegations. The Edmonton Sun also published a brief AP report on the 150 Haitian rape victims who marched in Port au Prince demanding justice.

The New York Times published an editorial examining the root causes of the 'restavek' issue. The Times' prescription for ending the *restavek* system, in which Haitian children toil as domestic servants, improving "access to schools and creating sustainable agriculture" is exactly what Haiti's democratic governments did from 1994 to 2004. Schools were built in rural areas that had not had a school in Haiti's 200 year history; special programs helped poor parents buy books and uniforms and pay school fees. Enrollment went up, illiteracy went down. This progress came to an abrupt halt in February 2004. Haiti once again has a constitutional government, which is once again making universal education

a top priority. The U.S. should generously support both the elected government and its education program.

The editorial also obscures the fact that US programs and policies have historically directly contributed to fueling the restavek problem by undermining Haitian agriculture: the creole pig eradication in 1982; dumping of surplus food under the guise of “food security” programs; and the elimination of Haiti’s import tariffs in 1994 on primary crops such as rice, fuelling an influx of American rice, devastating Haitian rice production and leading Haiti to become the largest importer of American rice.

The International Herald Tribune/AP reported the UN-backed “Disarm, Demobilize and Reinsert” (DDR) program offering 1000 “rank-and-file gang members” an opportunity to hand in their guns in exchange for “ID cards, money, food for their families and training for jobs such as construction workers and garbage collectors”. Top gang leaders are not eligible. Gives voice to several Haitian factory owners and industrialists. The report quotes several factory owners and Reginald Boulos President of the Haitian Chamber of Commerce who, skeptical of the DDR’s effectiveness, are pressuring the UN to “use stronger methods”. Preval is appointing a seven member commission to guide and implement the program.

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1. Police and political groups linked to Haiti sex attacks

By Andrew Buncombe in Washington

The Independent, UK

4 September 2006

<http://news.independent.co.uk/world/americas/article1359796.ece>

More than 30,000 women and girls - half under the age of 18 - were raped in Haiti's capital city in the chaotic two years following the ousting of the country's democratically elected president, a survey has suggested. About 8,000 people were killed during the same period.

The survey highlights the extraordinary violence at a time when the country was headed by an interim government imposed by the international community, following the enforced departure of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. "Our results indicate that crime and systematic abuse of human rights were common in [the capital] Port-au-Prince," the researchers from Wayne State University in Michigan said. "Although criminals were the most identified perpetrators of violations, political actors and UN soldiers were also frequently identified.

"These findings suggest the need for a systematic response from the newly elected Haitian government, the UN and social service organisations to address the ... consequences of human rights abuses."

Mr Aristide was forced from power in February 2004 by a coalition of former soldiers, members of the business community and US-backed political opponents. Following elections earlier this year, Rene Preval, a former president, was chosen to again lead the country.

The survey, based on random sampling and extrapolation, suggests that between February 2004 and December 2005, a total of 35,000 women were sexually assaulted. Of those attacks, 90 per cent involved rapes. The survey, published in *The Lancet*, does not make any comparison to the incidence of rape and killing prior to Mr Aristide's ousting. However, both the report's authors and other human rights workers said they believe the level of rape is directly linked to a high level of general violence and lawlessness - conditions that existed in abundance during the interim government period.

"Unfortunately, I think the rates are higher than we had anticipated," said one of the study's authors, Professor Royce Hutson.

He said that, while around half of rape perpetrators were identified as "general criminals", about 14 per cent were members of the Haitian National Police (HNP), a further 12 per cent as members of anti-Aristide groups, with about 25 per cent unidentified. He said the involvement of people with political links and the police suggested something "systematic" may have been taking place.

Of the 8,000 killings - a rate that would give the interim government one of the worst human rights records in the hemisphere - 22 per cent were committed by the police, 26 per cent by the demobilised army or armed anti-Aristide groups and 48 per cent by criminals. Both the HNP and members of the demobilised army acted against supporters of Mr Aristide and his Lavalas party.

Despite the election of Mr Preval, violence and rape has continued. Last Friday several hundred rape victims marched through the centre of Port-au-Prince, their faces covered by veils, to highlight the ongoing crisis. Organiser Eramithe Delva, of the Commission of Women Victims for Victims (KOFIV), said: "We are veiling our faces because this is how they come to our homes to rape us, beat us, destroy our homes, burn our things."

Anne Sosin, of the group Vizyon Dwa Ayisyen (Haiti Rights Vision), said: " Cases of rape have increased dramatically during the past two years. Rape is not being used a tool of political repression in the way it was during the 1991-94 period, where women were targeted because of their political activities or that of their husbands. These rapes are happening in the context of the current political crisis and are being perpetrated by groups that often have links to political actors."

The survey does not identify Lavalas supporters as being involved in any rapes or killings, although such people could be included in other categories. Brian Concannon, of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, said: "There are cases where family members have reported, during the same period, that Lavalas supporters and foreign soldiers are responsible for killings. The cases must be infrequent enough to not necessarily show up on this type of survey."

History of rape and murder

Sexual assault as a form of political repression has a long history in Haiti. A court in New York last week heard evidence against Emmanuel " Toto" Constant, a Haitian now living in the US, who led military death squads that raped and tortured followers of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in the early 1990s.

Under the military regime that ruled Haiti between 1991-94, the paramilitary group Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti (FRAPH) was responsible for a wave of killing and rape. In 2004, three unidentified women filed a lawsuit against Mr Constant. The hearing in New York was to determine whether Mr Constant owes damages to three women. He is in prison on mortgage fraud charges and did not attend the hearing.

One of the three woman told the court that masked men had burst into her home in Port-au-Prince in 1994 and raped her while her children saw " everything that was being done to me". She gave her evidence through a translator and from behind a screen, to hide her identity.

In 1996 the US State Department allowed Mr Constant to avoid deportation to Haiti and live freely in the US despite his position as head of FRAPH. Mr Constant says he worked for the CIA at the time.

2. Open season on Haiti's poor, study finds UN soldiers often identified as perpetrators JEFF HEINRICH The Montreal Gazette Friday, September 01, 2006

A study in the prestigious British medical journal The Lancet suggests that, despite the presence of a Canadian-led United Nations police force and UN peacekeepers, 8,000

people have been killed and 35,000 women and girls raped in Port-au-Prince alone since the ouster of then-president Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

Montreal Haitian groups say the peer-reviewed study by U.S. social workers confirms what the Canadian and Quebec governments have always denied: a massive campaign of repression against Haiti's poor under the post-Aristide regime of Gerard Latortue, the country's U.S.-appointed prime minister, from March 2004 to last June.

Haiti Action Montreal, an advocacy group, decried the violence yesterday and what it says is Canada's role in perpetuating it.

"Canada helped overthrow the elected government (of Aristide), provided significant aid to the installed regime (of Latortue) and led the UN police contingent, yet refuses to take any responsibility for the vast human rights abuses in Haiti over the past two years," the group said in a news release.

In the study, published online in *The Lancet* yesterday, two researchers at Wayne State University's School of Social Work, in Detroit, interviewed 5,720 people in 1,260 Haitian households in December 2005, asking questions about their lives in the 22 months since Aristide's fall.

The families lived in and around the capital, Port-au-Prince. They were selected randomly by GPS location, an unusual but necessary method for health and human rights surveys in countries like Haiti.

Phones are few and address lists and census data are unreliable.

(In another *Lancet* study, published in 2004, GPS tracking was used in Iraq to survey people and measure death rates before and after the U.S.-led invasion there in 2003.)

Of the 1,260 households studied in Haiti, 23 had lost family members in assassinations and killing since February 2004, and 94 had experienced sexual assault - in some cases, multiple sexual assault.

Extrapolated to the estimated 471,000 households in the greater Port-au-Prince area, the survey findings suggest 8,000 Haitians were murdered since Aristide's overthrow - about 12 a day.

Almost half of them were killed by government forces or "outside political actors" - mostly armed gangs opposed to Aristide and his Lavalas political party.

The study also estimated that 35,000 women and girls were sexually assaulted, more than half of them younger than 18 years old - a "shocking" rate of one in 40 girls, the researchers wrote.

Most of the perpetrators were believed to be criminals, but also cited were the Haitian National Police (14 per cent) and armed anti-Lavalas groups (11 per cent).

Many of the victims were so-called restaveks - unpaid child domestic servants from rural areas who work and live in the city.

And 90 per cent of all assaults involved penetration, sometimes multiple and sometimes with crude objects like a piece of metal.

Kidnappings and extrajudicial detentions, physical assaults, death threats, physical threats and threats of sexual violence were also common, the study found.

Fourteen per cent of the people interviewed accused foreign soldiers, including UN personnel, of all three types of threats.

The UN threats were direct and verbal; simply pointing a weapon in someone's direction in the course of duty was not considered a threat.

Of the UN soldiers blamed, half were identified as being from Brazil or Jordan; the study did not indicate whether Canadian personnel were involved.

In Ottawa, Foreign Affairs spokesperson Rejean Beaulieu, who specializes in Haiti and other Caribbean countries, said he was unaware of the study. Sent a copy by email and asked for comment, he did not respond.

A follow-up email last night also went unanswered.

Researchers Athena Kolbe and Royce Hutson concluded "that crime and systematic abuse of human rights were common in Port-au-Prince."

"Although criminals were the most identified perpetrators of violations, political actors and UN soldiers were also frequently identified.

"These findings suggest the need for a systematic response from the newly elected Haitian government (of President Rene Preval), the UN and social service organizations to address the legal, medical, psychological and economic consequences of widespread human rights abuses and crime."

In an editorial, The Lancet lent its influential voice to the researchers' conclusions, especially as regards the behaviour of the UN soldiers.

Noting that UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan "has spoken out firmly against exploitative behaviour by UN peacekeepers" worldwide, the journal's editors said the new study is a reminder that "severely traumatized populations (like Haiti's) remain vulnerable, and as Kolbe and Hutson show, suffering does not stop when peacekeepers arrive."

"UN peacekeepers must no longer add to that suffering."

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3. Canadian troops in Haiti accused of making death, rape threats

Jeff Heinrich, CanWest News Service

Edmonton Journal

Saturday, September 02, 2006

<http://www.canada.com/edmontonjournal/news/news/story.html?id=f50a6790-ead6-4eb1-8e61-5524594435b1&k=70375>

MONTREAL -- Canadian troops and police with the United Nations in Haiti made death threats during house raids and made sexual threats against women while drunk and off-duty, according to Haitians interviewed as part of a meticulous human-rights survey by U.S. researchers in December 2005 published this week in the British medical journal *The Lancet*.

The study, which estimated that 8,000 Haitians have been murdered and 35,000 women and girls raped since the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in early 2004, did not mention Canadians specifically, blaming only Brazilian and Jordanian troops for making threats.

But in an interview Friday, the study's lead author said Haitians interviewed for the peer-reviewed survey did pinpoint Canadians as among those UN personnel who threatened them physically or sexually over the 22 months studied.

"Canadians were definitely blamed for death threats and threats of physical and sexual violence," said Athena Kolbe, 30, an expert on Haiti who speaks Creole. She has visited Haiti often and is doing her master's degree at Wayne State University's School of Social Work, in Detroit.

One family was interviewed at their home in Delmas, an eastern suburb of the capital, Port-au-Prince.

"Canadian troops came to their house, and they said they were looking for (pro-Aristide) Lavalas chimeres, and threatened to kill the head of household, who was the father, if he didn't name names of people in their neighbourhood who were Lavalas chimeres or Lavalas supporters," Kolbe said by phone from San Francisco. (Chimeres is a Creole word meaning ``spooks" and refers to armed groups funded by the pro-Aristide Lavalas movement.)

"And he refused to, because, as he told us, he didn't know anyone."

How did he recognize the soldiers were Canadians?

"From the flag on the uniform," Kolbe said.

How did he remember the incident so precisely?

"Because the family was traumatized by it."

That incident was alleged to have taken place around the time of Aristide's departure in February 2004.

In another incident, "one woman said a Canadian soldier tried to have sex with her, that this soldier was drunk and she didn't want to, and that he was threatening her and grabbing at her when she didn't want to," Kolbe said.

The woman was out with her friends near a Canadian base, on a street where drunk and off-duty Canadian soldiers in uniform tried to pick up local women.

"She tried to tell him she wasn't interested, but he spoke French and she spoke Creole, so she didn't think that he really got it, and he wouldn't stop holding on to her."

Of the women in the study who complained of sexual threats, drunk and off-duty Canadian and American soldiers were most often blamed as the perpetrators, Kolbe said. "But regarding Brazilian and Jordanian troops, a lot of the sexual threats were actually when they were on patrol."

Canada sent 450 soldiers and other personnel along with six CH-146 Griffon helicopters to Haiti in March 2004 as part of a UN peacekeeping force of 6,700 military personnel and 1,600 police. The Canadian soldiers left in August of that year, but Canada still has 66 police officers in Haiti leading the UN's police

Overall, the survey of 5,720 randomly selected Haitians living in and around the capital found that 97 had received death threats, 232 had been threatened physically and 86 sexually. One-third of the perpetrators were criminals, about 20 per cent were Haitian National Police and other government security agents, and another 20 per cent were foreign soldiers.

Most soldiers were identified by the flag of their country displayed on their blue UN helmet or on their uniform sleeve over the upper arm. Other UN personnel, especially those on patrol with the Canadian-led CIVPOL police force or working in other units doing crowd control or training were harder to identify by country; they had blue helmets but no flags.

The allegations of misconduct indicate that UN troops in Haiti need to be reined in, Kolbe said.

"These instances are pretty much indicative of soldiers not having proper supervision or training."

Canadians would likely have been more frequently cited if the study hadn't been restricted to the greater Port-au-Prince area, where Canadian troops patrol less than elsewhere in Haiti, Kolbe added.

Told of the allegations after Kolbe related them late Friday afternoon, a spokesman for the Department of National Defence said they sounded specific and serious but needed verification before any comment could be made.

"Is there any way that you could give us time to comment?" said Lieut. Adam Thomson, asking publication of the allegations be delayed until after the Labour Day weekend.

Also in Ottawa Friday, Rejean Beaulieu, the Foreign Affairs Department spokesman for Haiti, refused comment, offering instead only an off-the-record, not-for attribution "deep background briefing" on Canada's role in Haiti.

Earlier, Beaulieu referred questions to the the UN, which he said "should be in a better position to answer since our people in Haiti were and are working under this umbrella."

In Montreal, a spokesman for Premier Jean Charest _ who visited Haiti in June 2005 and received its controversial prime minister Gerard Latortue at his Montreal office last March _ also declined comment.

"The type of relationship we have with Haiti is through humanitarian projects" _ in education, in civil service training and such, not peacekeeping or policing, which is Ottawa's jurisdiction, said Hugo d'Amours.

Ridiculous, retorted Marie-Dominik Langlois, co-ordinator of the Christian Committee for Human Rights in Latin America, a Montreal advocacy group founded in 1976 that promotes human rights in the region, including Haiti and other Caribbean countries.

"There are lots of humanitarian projects in Haiti that only serve to legitimize so-called community leaders" who had a role in the undemocratic removal of Aristide, and Quebec is involved with them, she said.

But one Montreal Haitian community group took an opposite view

"Impunity (from justice) reigns like a king in Haiti, but in my opinion, things would be even worse without the UN presence," said Marjorie Villefranche, director of programs at the Maison d'Haiti, a community centre founded in 1972 that serves some of the 70,000 Haitians here.

"The security situation has been getting worse in the last two years, and it's deplorable," she added. "There has been an acceleration of violence. But it's an acceleration caused by

armed groups, not foreign soldiers. The real mistake was that the UN didn't disarm everyone when they arrived."

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4. Haiti Rape Victims' walk held to demand justice

By AP

Edmonton Sun, Canada

September 2, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Wearing white dresses and black masks, 150 rape victims marched through Haiti's capital yesterday to demand justice and an end to discrimination against them.

Chants of "We will not give up the fight!" rose up as the protesters, including teenagers and elderly women, walked slowly to Haiti's National Palace. It was the first public demonstration in years by women calling attention to rape, which is rarely prosecuted in Haiti and carries a stigma against victims.

5. The lost children of Haiti

The New York Times Editorial

Published: September 5, 2006

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/09/05/opinion/edhaiti.php>

Haiti, founded two centuries ago by former slaves who fought to regain their freedom, has again become a hub of human trafficking.

Today, tens of thousands of Haitian children live lives of modern-day bondage. Under the system known as "restavek," a Creole word meaning "stay with," these children work for wealthier families in exchange for education and shelter. They frequently end up cruelly overworked, physically or sexually abused, and without access to education.

The most effective way to root out this deeply oppressive but deeply ingrained system would be to attack the conditions that sustain it - chiefly impoverished, environmentally unsustainable agriculture and a severe shortage of rural schools.

This is an area in which America can and should help. Washington has been quick to respond to political turmoil in Haiti, with its accompanying fears of uncontrollable refugee flows. But the frenzied flurries of international crisis management that follow typically leave no lasting results.

A wiser, more promising alternative would be to help create long-term economic options by improving access to schools and creating sustainable agriculture. Meanwhile, the United States should work with nongovernmental organizations to battle the resigned acceptance by many Haitians of the restavek system. They could, for example, help local radio stations broadcast programs of open dialogue about how damaging the system is, and include restavek survivors or human-rights experts.

The primary responsibility for eliminating the restavek system lies with the Haitian people and their government. After years of political crisis, there is a new democratically elected government. Eradicating the restavek system should be one of its top priorities, combining law enforcement efforts with attacks on the root social and economic causes.

The former slaves who won Haiti's freedom 200 years ago dreamed of something better for their children than restavek bondage. The time is overdue for helping those dreams become reality.

6. Haitian business leaders urge force if U.N.-backed gang disarmament fails

The Associated Press

International Herald Tribune

September 5, 2006

http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2006/09/06/news/CB_GEN_Haiti_Gang_Disarmament.php

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti A U.N.-backed plan to disarm hundreds of gangsters with offers of money and jobs drew tepid support Tuesday from Haiti's powerful business sector, which urged police and peacekeepers to respond with force if the bid fails.

Up to 1,000 rank-and-file gang members who voluntarily lay down arms and rejoin society will be eligible for the program, the biggest disarmament effort of the two-year-old U.N. peacekeeping mission. Haiti's most wanted gangs leaders won't be eligible.

"We support the approach of offering people a chance to hand in their weapons. However, if people do not respect the program, U.N. (troops) and police have to use stronger methods," said Reginald Boulos, Haitian Chamber of Commerce president.

President Rene Preval is this week expected to appoint a seven-member commission to decide who can join the program, scheduled to begin this month.

Boulos said private sector members haven't been asked to help the commission but that "we would be ready to participate."

The U.N.-backed "Disarm, Demobilize and Reinsert" program is the latest in a string of efforts to neutralize street gangs blamed for a wave of kidnappings and killings since a bloody revolt ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004. Preval last

month warned gangsters, some whom are loyal to Aristide, to lay down their guns or face death.

Rene Max Auguste, a factory owner and board member of the American Chamber of Commerce in Haiti, said he doubted the plan would work, citing the international community's poor track record in disarming Haitian militants over the last decade.

"It has never worked. I am very pessimistic," said Auguste, who also called for "tougher measures" against gangs if the plan fails.

Charles Henri Baker, a wealthy industrialist who finished third in February's presidential election and has advocated a hardline approach to gangs, said the program was too limited and wouldn't reduce violence.

"No one knows how many arms are out there. We might have more than 30,000 weapons and disarming only 1,000 (gangsters) is only a drop in a bucket," Baker said.

U.N. envoy Edmond Mulet said Monday he believes between 500 to 700 gangsters are behind recent violence.

Mulet said program participants will get ID cards, money, food for their families and training for jobs such as construction workers and garbage collectors.

Support from business owners will be crucial for the plan's success, but Baker said he doesn't know if he would "welcome former criminals to work for my company."

"It will depend on who he is, how many crimes he has committed, how many people he has killed and what he was involved in before," he said.

7. Haiti, U.N. to Disarm Gang Members

Associated Press

By STEVENSON JACOBS

Forbes.com

09.04.2006

<http://www.forbes.com/business/healthcare/feeds/ap/2006/09/04/ap2991904.html>

Haiti's government and U.N. peacekeepers will launch a major campaign seeking to persuade hundreds of gangsters to disarm with promises of money, food and job training, but top gang leaders will not be eligible, the U.N. envoy said Monday.

In an exclusive interview with The Associated Press, special U.N. envoy Edmond Mulet said officials will begin airing radio and television ads in coming days to inform the public about the disarmament plan.

The move represents the most sweeping effort to persuade well-armed gangsters to lay down their weapons and rejoin society since U.N. troops arrived in the troubled Caribbean nation two years ago to restore order following a February 2004 revolt.

"We are ready to receive 1,000 armed people who would willingly give up their weapons and arms," Mulet said. "We have kits to provide for their families, food and economic assistance. The whole package is ready and we're going to bring that in place in the following days."

Last month, President Rene Preval warned gangs based in the sprawling slums of Port-au-Prince to disarm or face death.

The gangs, some of which are loyal to ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, are blamed for a recent surge of kidnappings and shootings that officials say are partly aimed at pressuring Preval to make concessions.

The initiative targets only rank-and-file gang members, Mulet said. Top gang leaders in the capital's volatile Cite Soleil slum have indicated a willingness to disarm, and the decision to leave them out sets up a potential showdown with the government.

"This is not for the big people responsible for human rights violence or criminal activities or killings or kidnappings. That we have to deal with in a different way," Mulet said in his office inside the fortified U.N. compound.

Top gang leaders in the capital's volatile Cite Soleil slum have indicated a willingness to disarm, but Mulet said the initiative will target low-ranking gang members.

"This is not for the big people responsible for human rights violence or criminal activities or killings or kidnappings. That we have to deal with in a different way," he said.

It will be up to a new, seven-member commission to decide who is eligible, Mulet said. Preval will appoint the commission this week in a presidential decree, Mulet said, adding that he expected its membership to include people "from all different sectors" of Haitian society.

Preval's office declined to comment.

Gang members participating in the program will receive ID cards entitling them to money, medical assistance, food for their families and training for manual-labor jobs such as construction workers, garbage collectors and farm workers, Mulet said.

Jobs are not plentiful in this Caribbean nation, which is the Western Hemisphere's poorest.

Mulet, a Guatemalan diplomat who took over leadership of the 8,800-soldier U.N. peacekeeping force three months ago, called the disarmament campaign a "long-term" plan and said it would provide a "big improvement" to Haiti's security if successful.

"We believe 500, 600, maybe 700 people are involved in this kind of illegal activities ... so I think if we're able to disarm most of them and include them into society and give them some training and assistance in this transition, that's going to be very positive."

The international community is desperate to stabilize Haiti after a decade of failed peacekeeping missions and fruitless efforts to disarm militants. A bid to take weapons off the streets after the 2004 revolt that toppled Aristide yielded mostly dilapidated guns held together by tape - not the high-powered AK-47s and M-16 routinely used by gangs.

Mulet acknowledged the challenge but said "we have to try this."

"This is not a traditional disarmament that you would see anywhere else in the world where you have a clear leadership or a subversive group or a military insurgency that you can make deals with. This is more like a one-on-one approach. Each (gang member) has different motivations," he said.

One challenge will be gaining the support of Haiti's business community, which has taken a hard line on the gangs that it blames for driving foreign investment away from the deeply impoverished nation.

Mulet predicted business leaders would back the plan, saying they recognize the problem of gang activity. "Any measure to incorporate these people into society is more than welcome to them," he said.